

Mr. Ford's Page

IT MAY be useful, for a change, to commence a discussion of Loyalty in Industry at the point of the Loyalty of the Employer. There is always enough being said about the need of loyalty in the employes, and indeed that is a most important point. But the other is important too. Loyalty, to be fruitful and enduring, must issue from opposite sides. Loyalty on the part of employes must be met by loyalty on the part of the employer. Perhaps, in these times, it is the part of the employer to be the first to demonstrate loyalty.

What are we to be loyal to? If we can settle that question, or even throw a little light upon it, it might do much to help us think straight.

What is it that brings employer and employe together in the first place? In modern industry they first meet as strangers. Sometimes, so far as personal acquaintance goes, they remain strangers. Yet it is not long before they get a pretty definite idea of each other. The idea may be wrong, but it is definite. The employe may have a wrong mind-picture of his employer's intentions, because of the harshness and injustice of superintendents or foremen. It is one of the biggest problems on the human side of management to prevent the employer's real ideas for the good of his men from losing all their vitality by the time they have filtered down through the subordinates of the organization.

On the other hand, the employer may have a wrong mind-picture of the employes, because of the actions and utterances of a noisy and obstructive minority. Whatever may be said about "collective bargaining," so-called, and other related matters, one objection is that there is too little "collectiveness" about it. A spokesman who does not work in the shop, who does not work in any shop, whose sole ambition perhaps is never again to have to work in a shop, is usually the "bargainer," and it is from what he says or does that many employers draw their opinion of the men in the shop.

This, of course, is wrong, and it leads to many misrepresentations and misunderstandings which could be adjusted in a minute if the two parties actually knew each other and the conditions under which each of them have to work. No thoughtful man will deny for a moment that there are too many "go-betweens" who are really "keep-aparts"; they increase the distance between the two interested parties.

Here is a man, perhaps a wage-earner, who gets a mechanical idea which he develops and in which he sees possibilities of great usefulness. He cannot put it on the market alone—no man can do much alone—and so he calls in men to help him, and he pays them. If he is a success, his force increases, and with it his own managerial problems increase, until he is so busy, and the men in the shop are so busy and numerous, that personal contact largely ceases. Those who knew him when his office problems were so light that he could lend a hand in the shop are usually loyal to him personally. They know him; they know him to be one with them in his ideas and experience and sympathies.

But after while the business itself grows so large as to supplant the personality of the man. In a big business the employer is just like the employe—he is partly lost in the mass. Together they have created a great productive organization which sends out articles which the world buys because they are useful, and which bring in money which provides a livelihood for everyone engaged there. The business itself becomes the big thing.

There is something humanly sacred about a big business which provides a living for hundreds and thousands of families. When one looks about at the babies that are coming into the world and carefully tended, at the boys and girls who are being sent to school and educated, at the young workmen who, on the strength of their jobs, are being married and setting up for themselves, at the thousands of homes that are being paid for in installments out of the earnings of the men—when one looks at a great productive organ-

ization that is enabling all these things to be done by those who are engaged in it and for their families, one feels it to be like murder, a terrible crime, to attempt or to risk anything that would jeopardize in the least degree a business on which so many depend.

The employer is a man like any of his employes, subject to all the limitations of humanity. The only thing that justifies him in holding his job is that he can fill it. If he can steer the business straight, if his men can trust him to run his end of the work properly and without endangering their settled condition in life, then he is filling his place just like anyone else. Otherwise he is no more fit for his position than a schoolboy would be on an important job of pattern making. The employer is judged by his ability, just as everyone else should be.

He may be but a name to the men—a name on a signboard. But there is the business—it is more than a name. It produces the living of everyone in it, and a living is a pretty tangible thing. The business is a reality. It does things. It is a going concern. The evidence of its fitness is that the pay envelopes keep coming.

Why not begin loyalty there? If the shop is keeping your family, educating your children, buying your home, providing you with a reasonable certainty of employment and a money return that you can do things on, you are entitled to regard it as something which is definitely connected with your interest: its welfare is yours.

As to personal loyalty, only the independent employer can be loyal to his men. The other kind of employer may want to be, but the influences above him on which he depends often prevent him. The independent employer, who does not have to bow to capitalists above him, can prevent anything being done that will decrease the return which his men draw from the business. He can, indeed, freely devote himself to devising ways and means by which they shall be enabled to draw more. Not only may he feel this to be a duty which he owes to his men, but he takes a pride in it. High wages are the result of two elements: the industry of the men, first. But this industry can be nullified by bad management. So the second element is good management, and it is here that the employer's pride may come to him. When he adds good management to his men's industry, and this enables a greater return to be made all round, the business as a human concern is a success. There is a great distinction between a manufactured article being a success, and the organization that manufactures it being a success. The one is a mechanical problem; the other is a human problem.

The forces which are aiming to undermine American industry—and some of these forces have a very high capitalistic

origin, don't forget that!—aim first for the breakdown of loyalty of any character whatsoever. They want it to break down.

It is a truth which every American workman ought to know that 95 per cent of the agitation which they see around them does not grow up out of the working people, but it comes down through hired agitators from the would-be capitalistic rulers who want to use the workmen themselves to break down the very industries on which the workmen depend, in order that then the workmen may be thrown on their tender mercies.

You are not hitting the capitalist when you hit industry; you are hitting the workman. Industry, independent industry, is the only foe the capitalist fears. Employers and employes have a common interest against the speculative capitalists. These international capitalists know that if they can split employer and employe apart, and so break up industry, they can control the field. And the pity of it is that so many employers and employes are blindly playing the game of their common enemy.

A man is loyal to the house that shelters him. He doesn't see what is to be gained by knocking it down. The same kind of loyalty to the industries that provide for us will block the game which the hired destructionists are playing.

AN ATTACK on industry is not an attack on speculative capitalists, but an attack on the people who are supported by industry. Honest, independent industry is the greatest enemy that speculative capitalism has. Fully 95 per cent of the agitation which threatens the well-being of industry is financed by speculative capitalists for the sake of driving a wedge between employer and employe, whose interests are in common, and breaking down the loyalty to the productive institution on which both depend. Threats of disorder and destruction do not have their origin with the men who work in the shop, but in outside agitators who do not work in any shop and will not work in any shop. The crippling of industry is a victory for the common enemy, International Speculative Capitalism.